AIRSCOOP

Edited by Wendy Kappi

PHAN William R. Crosby

Carrier Clips

John C. Stennis (CVN 74) entered an overhaul period in San Diego, Calif., in October 1998. The six-month planned incremental availability includes alterations, modernization and repairs to combat and flight systems, weapons and aircraft elevators, and crew habitability areas.

Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) returned to her home port of NAS Norfolk, Va., in December 1998 following a six-month deployment to the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas and the Arabian Gulf.

Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) returned to her home port in San Diego, Calif., in December 1998 following a six-month deployment to the western Pacific, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf.

The *Enterprise* (CVN 65) battle group departed the Arabian Gulf on 2 January en route to the Mediterranean, leaving the *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) battle group on station in the gulf. *Enterprise's* gulf service was marked by participation in Operation Desert Fox, air strikes on Iraq conducted from 16 to 19 December 1998 to degrade President Saddam Hussein's ability to create and deliver weapons of mass destruction (see Jan–Feb 99).

In January, Newport News Shipbuilding, Va., reported that construction of the next *Nimitz*-class carrier, *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76), was 45 percent complete.

Osprey Takes to the Sea

The V-22 testing program reached a milestone when engineering, manufacturing and development *Osprey* #10 began sea trials off the coast of Virginia aboard *Saipan* (LHA 2) on 14 January. The month-long sea trials were scheduled to include studying the tilt-rotor's launch and recovery

AW3 Corry J. Nettles

Cdr. Kevin Miller

PH3 Timothy S. Smith

Scenes from *Enterprise* (CVN 65) in the Arabian Gulf: opposite, with flight ops completed, three F/A-18 *Hornets* of Carrier Air Wing 3 return to the ship. This page, top: PH2 Michael Pendergrass composes a shot from an HS-7 helicopter operating from *Enterprise*. Above, F/A-18 *Hornets* of VFA-105 fly the "hawk circle" around the carrier while waiting for a ready deck. Left, catapult officer Lt. Drew Kenny waits for acknowledgement from a pilot before a launch.

PH1 (SW) Benjamin D. Olvey

A V-22 *Osprey* comes aboard *Saipan* (LHA 2) during sea trials in January.

envelope in relation to the ship's 10 existing helicopter landing spots; external load tests and night flying for the first time in a shipboard environment; and testing of the aircraft's compatibility with *Saipan's* hangar deck, elevators, and launch and recovery spots. Four low-rate initial production *Ospreys* will be delivered this year.

Super Hornet Highlights

On 3 December 1998 an F/A-18F *Super Hornet* fired two high-speed anti-radiation missiles aboard Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, China Lake, Calif., in the *Super Hornet* program's first full system live-fire test of forward-firing ordnance. Also in December, the Boeing Co. delivered F/A-18E6, the first production model, to the Navy a month ahead of schedule. The first *Super Hornet* squadron, Strike Fighter Squadron 122, celebrated its 1 October 1998 establishment in a 15 January ceremony at NAS Lemoore, Calif. (see p. 30). And on 18 January, F/A-18E6 accomplished the *Super Hornet* test program's 4,000th flight hour at NAS Patuxent River, Md.

Prowler Improvements

Electronic Attack Squadron 131, NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., is the first squadron to install the Multimission Advanced Tactical Terminal (MATT) and Improved Data Modem (IDM), which complement the EA-6B *Prowler's* ALQ-99 jamming system. The MATT provides the capability to receive near-real-time data and communicate that data to another strike asset using the IDM.

Northrop Grumman, St. Augustine, Fla., delivered the first of 20 EA-6B *Prowlers* from the Block 89 upgrade program to NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., on 23 December 1998. The upgrade includes a new wing center section and standard depot-level maintenance.

Aries Additions

On 5 December 1998, Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 1, NAS

Whidbey Island, Wash., received the newest version of the EP-3E *Aries II*. The Sensor System Improvement Program upgrades to communications and data link and signal exploitation systems will enable EP-3 mission commanders to manage multisource data more efficiently, making it easier to analyze and report intelligence information more quickly.

Future Flight

What's so special about a 26-hour flight from Canada to Scotland in August 1998? The aircraft was the *Aerosonde*, the first robotic aircraft to cross the Atlantic. With a nine-foot wing span and weighing 29 pounds, the *Aerosonde* was packed with computers, a radio, global positioning satellite and meteorological instruments to demonstrate its ability to collect weather data and operate autonomously over long distances or in remote locations.

The Electrically Powered Actuation Design Program—a joint effort of the Navy, Air Force and National Aeronautics and Space Administration—is studying the use of electrically operated actuators to replace current hydraulic systems. In 1998, researchers at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards AFB, Calif., performed flight testing of three experimental actuators and their associated electronics installed in Dryden's modified F/A-18 *Hornet*. The "power-by-wire" concept would produce a lighter aircraft less vulnerable to such threats as small-arms fire.

Mishaps

An AV-8B *Harrier* attached to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163 (Reinforced), MCAS El Toro, Calif., crashed in the water southwest of Guam on 3 December 1998. The pilot ejected from the aircraft and was brought aboard *Essex* (LHD 2) by an HH-46D *Sea Knight* from Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 11.

Two Marine F/A-18C *Hornets* of Marine Fighter-Attack Squadron 212 operating from MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, were involved in a mishap in January. One plane crashed about 20 miles off the coast of Japan, and the pilot was recovered from the water by a Japanese air rescue crew. The second *Hornet* landed safely at Iwakuni.

For the Record

Aircraft from two F/A-18 *Hornet* squadrons from NAS Cecil Field, Fla., arrived at their new home aboard NAS Oceana, Va., on 4 December 1998. Strike Fighter Squadrons 131 and 136 were the first of 10 *Hornet* squadrons scheduled to relocate to Oceana by the end of 1999.

Raytheon Co., Lexington, Mass., received a $134 million contract for full-rate production of the Joint Standoff Weapon, AGM-154A, and low-rate initial production for the AGM-154B. Delivery of the first B variant, which includes a submunition for armored targets, is planned for December.

It's a Hawkeye . . . Orion?

Text and photo by Mike Wilson

Residents of southern Maryland might have noticed a strange silhouette flying in the skies over NAS Patuxent River, Md., recently—an airframe large enough to be a P-3 *Orion*, but with a radome like an E-2 *Hawkeye*.

That's exactly what it is.

This one-of-a-kind hybrid is an NP-3D *Orion*. Its similarities to the *Hawkeye* early warning aircraft are more than radome-deep. Inside, it also carries the *Hawkeye 2000* electronics suite and a combined engagement capability common equipment set designed to provide battle force commanders with detailed battle space updates.

Developed by the Naval Research Laboratory, the Cooperative Engagement Capability program office and the E-2C program office, this unique P-3 will provide a platform for command and control, electronic warfare and electro-optics research and development for the future.